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Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 8 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Grauls ..... (Belgium)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic

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08-54037 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

1. **The Chairperson** said that during his July mission to the Central African Republic he had extended an invitation to the Government of that country to come to United Nations Headquarters to describe the challenges the authorities faced and the actions under way or planned for the near future to respond to those challenges.

Adoption of the agenda (PBC/3/CAF/2)

2. *The agenda was adopted.*

Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic

3. **Mr. Maliko** (Central African Republic), Minister of Planning, Economy and International Cooperation, said that since the late 1960s the history of his country had been marked by armed coups, dictatorships and State terror. Since 1990, there had been rebellions and riots, resulting in large numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees. Crumbling institutions, various abuses and impunity had become common.

4. As a result, poverty was widespread. The gross domestic product had fallen by 1 per cent each year from 1995 to 2003, the country's already low life expectancy had dropped further, school enrolment rates had plunged and unemployment was high.

5. In response, a movement had arisen in 2003 whose goal was to establish stability. The challenges faced during the transition period from 2003 to 2005, which included building consensus, putting a halt to the violence and re-establishing the rule of law, had all been met. A new constitution had been adopted, and presidential and legislative elections had been held. Overall, peace had returned. However, there had been a resurgence of organized crime and activity by armed groups in the northern part of the country. Moreover, the crises in the Sudan and Chad had spilled over into the Central African Republic, victimizing the population and exposing them to terror and displacement.

6. Four priorities had been established as part of the peacebuilding process, namely: conflict resolution and inclusive political dialogue; reform of the security sector; good governance; and combating poverty. The current year had been critical for organizing the political dialogue, as a comprehensive peace agreement had been reached in June 2008. The President of Gabon had been chosen as the international mediator. Conflicts of interest had had to be managed, and now the Government was at the stage of establishing practical modalities for the inclusive political dialogue, which would begin at the end of the year.

7. Security sector reform had involved capacity-building in the areas of personnel and equipment. The goals of the reform were to protect citizens against domestic and foreign aggression, protect territorial integrity and participate in conflict reduction in the region, to the extent possible.

8. Good governance involved strengthening ties between Government institutions and citizens to restore the social fabric. Work was already under way in the spheres of justice and the rule of law; the economy; local governance; and women and youth. Goals included managing the country's natural resources transparently and creating an environment attractive to investors; involving local communities in consultations on all issues of national interest; and incorporating women and young people into the peacebuilding process. Development projects producing rapid, visible results would be launched based on needs assessments carried out in each region. One outcome of development would be to reduce threats to stability, thereby enabling the country to make progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

9. He drew attention to the urgency of organizing the inclusive political dialogue, which would cost an estimated $2.5 million. Other pressing measures that flowed from the dialogue recommendations and needed to be taken immediately, or perhaps even before the dialogue began, included demobilization of rebels, restitution for victims of violence, reintegration of ex-combatants, security sector reform and the provision of socio-economic support programmes to communities affected by the conflicts.

10. The high cost of post-conflict recovery measures also illustrated the difficulty of achieving both peace and development. The country would face great financial challenges related to poverty reduction during the period 2008-2010. The financial shortfall would be at least $1.5 million, and up to 2015, some $700 million would have to be mobilized each year.

11. The link between peace and investment was important. The aim was to achieve a rate of investment of 15 per cent, which would permit double-digit

growth starting in 2008. That corresponded to the typical post conflict model. An increase in private investment was expected in 2009 to support economic recovery and fight poverty. In some regions, two thirds of the people were living below the poverty level. It would take at least eight years to change that situation. Given the current food, fuel and economic crises, more time might be required.

12. **Mr. Fall** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Central African Republic) said that the adoption of a general amnesty law by the National Assembly of the Central African Republic had been an important step. He was concerned, however, that two of the key stakeholders in the dialogue process, the coalition of opposition parties, known as the Union des forces vives de la Nation (UVFN), and the Armée Populaire pour la restauration de la democratie (APRD), had expressed reservations, in particular regarding the time frame for cantonment, demobilization and disarmament of rebel forces.

13. It was essential that the international community should assist the Government and other national stakeholders in addressing those reservations and discuss the implementation of the law. In that regard the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) had contacted the Gabonese authorities and regional and international partners with a view to convening an extraordinary session of the follow-up committee to discuss the latest developments and ensure that all stakeholders remained on board. BONUCA would also continue its work to make the Dialogue Preparatory Committee more representative and inclusive. The successful conclusion of those efforts would remove the last obstacle to the holding of the dialogue, and the new time frame could be announced.

14. The United Nations continued to work with the authorities to use the US$ 10 million provided by the Peacebuilding Fund to establish structures and mechanisms to meet the needs of the Central African Republic in the areas of security sector reform, good governance and the rule of law and the revitalization of conflict-affected communities. The steering committee, which he co-chaired with the Central African Minister of Planning, Economy and International Cooperation, had held several meetings to select priority projects and finalize the recruitment of personnel. To date 11 projects had been selected.

15. Progress in stabilization efforts, including a general amnesty law, should pave the way for the inclusive political dialogue. Implementation of the conclusions of the National Seminar on Security Sector Reform as well as of the priority projects funded by the Peacebuilding Fund could only be sustained with the continued commitment of national stakeholders and international partners, and in a climate of peace.

16. While the international community would continue to offer its support, the primary responsibility for improving the standard of living in the country remained with the Government and people as a whole. The holding of the inclusive political dialogue and implementation of its outcome by all stakeholders would be the beginning of the journey of national reconstruction. The Peacebuilding Commission would play an important role in that journey, but the Central African Government should also formulate a coherent, well-designed peacebuilding strategy. That would make international aid more strategic and targeted and would serve to attract additional resources to the country.

17. **Mr. Lacroix** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the renewed commitment of the Government of the Central African Republic to a national dialogue with all political stakeholders and the involvement of regional partners, under the leadership of Gabon. The inclusive national dialogue would strengthen institutions and peacebuilding and should continue to be a priority for the United Nations and the Special Representative. At the same time, every effort must be made to promote stability in the region. To that end the European Union had successfully deployed the European Union Force (EUFOR) alongside the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT).

18. The European Union endorsed the Peacebuilding Commission's intention to concentrate on a limited number of priorities with a view to restoring peace, stability and prosperity in the country as set out in the background paper prepared by the Peacebuilding Support Office. It looked forward to the discussions on the strategic framework for those peacebuilding priorities.

19. Strengthening the rule of law, security sector reform and the establishment of development poles were mutually reinforcing activities. It would not be possible, for example, to increase access to justice without professional and responsible security forces.

Economic and social development would be difficult unless the Government could impose its authority throughout the country. Public, private and international investment would be limited in the absence of reliable and transparent management mechanisms. The national Government and international partners must therefore make a long-term commitment to meeting the challenges facing the Central African Republic. The European Union would participate actively in that process.

20. **Mr. Rivière** (European Community), speaking on behalf of the European Commission, said that the European Community was doing everything possible to support the peacebuilding priorities in the Central African Republic through the European Development Fund and the community budget. For example, in June the Commission and the Government of the Central African Republic had signed a programming document allocating 137 million euros for the promotion of good governance during the period 2008-2013.

21. The Commission wished to establish a partnership of equals with the Central African Republic, dedicated to the implementation of jointly agreed development priorities. Both sides must therefore work to promote mutual understanding and build a Central African Republic based on peace, democratic stability and development.

22. In the area of security, the Commission had since 2004 contributed to the funding of the former Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) multinational subregional force (FOMUC) and the current Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) subregional peacekeeping force, MICOPAX. He commended those two organizations, the States of the region and the African Union for their commitment to a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the Central African Republic.

23. The Government of the Central African Republic would not be able to provide services to its citizens unless it asserted its authority over the entire country. To that end the European Commission supported the security and justice system reform and welcomed the organization by the Government of a national seminar on that topic in April 2008 and the establishment of security sector reform committees in September 2008. The European Commission, France and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had cooperated closely in promoting security sector reform with a view to avoiding duplication of effort and having the greatest effect possible. The coordination mechanism soon to be established between those partners and the national authorities would be open to all members of the Peacebuilding Commission. In keeping with the conclusions of the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, the European Commission wished the Central African Republic to be a model for coordination.

24. Security sector reform must occur in a peaceful political context founded on consensus among the national political stakeholders about the steps to be taken. That underscored the importance of President Bozizé's efforts to promote the widest possible political dialogue, with the assistance of President Bongo of Gabon. In order to ensure political stability the international community must mobilize the resources necessary to launch a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme as quickly as possible. The Peacebuilding Fund must implement such a programme as quickly as possible, in accordance with the June 2008 comprehensive peace agreement. The international community should likewise support the holding of elections in 2010.

25. Supplementary funds must be mobilized to ensure development, and at the same time the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) must be implemented. International support and a critical mass of funding were the keys to helping the country achieve sustainable healthy growth. The success of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration might well be judged by the amount of additional funding it could mobilize for the Central African Republic, which was also severely affected by the current food and energy/oil crisis. The European Commission fully supported the Government in its affords to make donors aware of its needs. In that context he noted that the European Commission was preparing specific measures to alleviate the food crisis in the country.

26. The Government's decision to establish development poles in the context of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper was a wise response to socio-economic challenges such as poverty, the establishment of enclaves within the country, insecurity and the Government's lack of control in the provinces; that decision should be supported by international partners. The criteria for the designation of those poles could be refined with the authorities in order to promote synergy

between the work of national and international partners. The European Commission had allocated 72.5 million euros to support socio-economic and governmental renewal in the provinces, with special attention to socio-economic development, infrastructure, and governance, including the prefecture system, the police and the justice system.

27. **Ms. Meyer** (World Bank) said that the World Bank supported the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the priorities it had identified for the Central African Republic. She recalled that the Bank's previous country re-engagement note for the Central African Republic had expired in 2004. The World Bank and the African Development Bank had, however, recently agreed on a joint interim strategy note for 2007-2008 aimed at helping the country pay its arrears, participate in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, provide basic services and promote social and political stability.

28. Currently the International Development Agency (IDA) was working to promote economic recovery and human development while the International Finance Corporation (IFC) was working to improve the business climate and promote small and medium enterprises. In 2007 the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) had made its first investment in the Central African Republic, to support the development of a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) network and Internet services.

29. In response to the many challenges facing the Central African Republic, the World Bank had allocated US$ 8 million in emergency food relief for 2008 and would, in cooperation with France, allocate US$ 8 million for an emergency energy project. The Bank had also allocated a further US$ 8 million for local development centred on rural communities. A third development policy operation would provide US$ 4 to 5 million in the current fiscal period to continue strengthening public finance management, good governance and natural resource management. Progress had been made by the Central African Republic towards the HIPC completion point and the Bank would continue to support those efforts. With regard to IDA 15 replenishment, she said that allocations were made on the basis of a formula which included institutional and economic performance, with appropriate weighting for fragile States; improvement in those factors could lead to an increase in funding.

30. Turning to the lessons learned from the Bank's re-engagement in the Central African Republic, she said that the inclusive dialogue process offered hope for political stability; any agreed reforms must, however, be translated rapidly into an implementation plan, failing which there was a risk of a resurgence of violence, especially given the short time frame before the potentially destabilizing election campaign in 2010. Innovative strategies must be developed to promote stability in the north, where the prevailing insecurity prevented producers from reaching markets. There must be greater coordination between donors and the Government in areas outside Bangui, where the population had little access to services and where unemployment was high.

31. The authorities must promote transparency, combat corruption, prevent abuses of power by civil servants and ensure respect for human rights. In that regard she welcomed the designation of good governance as one of the Peacebuilding Commission's priorities. Management of public finances and the delivery of basic services must likewise be strengthened, in particular in conflict areas. If the peace agreement and amnesty law proved effective, the Government would be expected to decentralize service delivery to conflict as well as non-conflict areas; continued efforts to improve the security situation would facilitate that process, and bilateral and multilateral partners would no doubt be asked to contribute their expertise.

32. As for the future, she said that the World Bank had agreed to develop a joint strategy with the African Development Bank for the fiscal period 2009-2013 aimed at encouraging dialogue with the Government and partners for medium-term efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals, promote stability, reduce poverty and encourage growth. That would also be a demonstration of the World Bank's commitment, after a long absence, to supporting the Central African Republic, despite ongoing security concerns.

33. The World Bank welcomed the Government's first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2008-2010. The inclusive dialogue and peace process would provide an opportunity for the Bank to offer support in such areas as expanding government, public finance management and human development. Its actions on the ground would be guided by its experience in other conflict-affected countries and consultations with all stakeholders. Consideration was also being given to

drawing on trust fund resources for the promotion of peace and security in the region, reintegration of combatants and the establishment of a platform for coordination and synergies.

34. **Mr. Meurs** (United States of America) asked what proposals the Government had, in the context of the amnesty and reconciliation, for bringing to justice those members of the security forces who should be held accountable for the mistreatment of civilians and the perpetration of atrocities. In the context of the unprecedented energy crisis in Bangui, it would also be helpful to hear the Government's perspective on longer-terms solutions and on the impact of the lack of energy on the development poles. In relation to the problem of armed bandits carrying out large-scale thefts of livestock and kidnappings in the northern region, he wondered what the Government intended to do over the next two years, in conjunction with the international community, to assert control over that region.

35. **Mr. Onanga M. Ndiaye** (Gabon) offered his country's full support and expressed the willingness of the Gabonese President to work with the Central African Republic to help bring peace and security to the country. Gabon was also willing to convene an extraordinary meeting of the follow-up committee which might make it possible to move beyond the current impasse. His country would do everything possible to support the Commission's upcoming mission to the Central African Republic.

36. **Mr. El Shinawi** (Egypt) noted that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had referred to 11 projects that would be funded with US$ 10 million from the Peacebuilding Fund. He wished to know if there were any further details on those projects and on the selection criteria that had been adopted.

37. **The Chairperson**, speaking in his national capacity, said that in the last few years the Central African Government had made efforts to restore stability in its territory through a national reconciliation process. An inclusive political dialogue with rebel groups had resulted in the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement in Libreville in June 2008, and some progress had been made in the drafting of an amnesty law, although additional contacts would be needed to reach a consensus.

38. The international community's renewed interest in the situation in the country had been apparent from the round table of development partners in October 2007, at which the Government had presented its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and had received pledges for a total amount of $600 million. In January 2008, the Central African Republic had been allocated $10 million from the Peacebuilding Fund, and in April a seminar on security sector reform had taken place in Bangui.

39. On the humanitarian level, Belgium had responded to the 2008 appeal for the Central African Republic with 500,000 euros for humanitarian action by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help displaced persons and 600,000 euros for humanitarian assistance by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

40. Belgium was also providing 314,000 euros for a UNICEF textbook project in the Central African Republic, bringing the total Belgian contribution for 2008 to 1,414,000 euros. Belgium had also agreed to guide the efforts of the country-specific configuration.

41. The country-specific configuration, together with the Central African Government and its partners, had identified three priority areas for peacebuilding: security sector reform; good governance and the rule of law; and development poles. Belgium's contribution to security sector reform had included the sending of an expert (financed by the European Commission) to assist the Government in developing and implementing its new strategy in that area. Belgium also intended to participate in a European Union project to co-finance a new installation for the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace (MICOPAX). In conjunction with UNDP, Belgium also proposed to send a Belgian expert to guide the 12-month mission to Bangui of a multidisciplinary team in security sector reform.

42. The success of those efforts would depend on the anchoring of the work and priorities of the country-specific configuration in a nationally owned project and on the resumption of the political dialogue with all political actors and armed groups. The Commission should support the Government in its efforts, while making its expectations clear.

43. **Ms. Lute** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support) said that the presentation by the Government of the Central African Republic had been an important milestone in the Commission's engagement with that country. She welcomed the Chairperson's exploratory visit to the country in July

2008 and his assessment of that visit as important contributions to the Commission's ongoing dialogue with Government officials.

44. The Central African Government's presentation had confirmed the analyses made by the Chairperson and others of the country's needs and challenges. Peacebuilding was a complex and painstaking process. She highlighted the four priority areas of engagement that had been discussed at the current meeting and said that the next step in the process would be the Commission's upcoming visit to the Central African Republic, followed by the development of a strategic framework for peacebuilding in the country.

45. **Mr. Maliko** (Central African Republic) said that the peacebuilding process would be lengthy and complex. His country had shown continuous commitment and determination despite the setbacks that had affected political dialogue, reform and State capacity-building. The process would inevitably be conditioned by emergencies. Demobilization, reintegration and the redeployment of public services to conflict areas required particular attention. Development efforts needed to factor in the four interconnected priority areas that had been identified.

46. Responding to questions asked by the representative of the United States of America, he said that the human rights violations that had taken place could not be ignored. The reform process would take into account international legal conventions and would address all atrocities, whether committed by members of the police force or by other individuals.

47. The electrical energy sector was in crisis. The assistance offered by the World Bank and France would help in the short term. However, a comprehensive approach would be necessary in the longer term in order to strengthen and restructure the sector. Liberalization would remove one obstacle to potential economic development.

48. The reform of the security sector would allow a more adequate response to large-scale banditry. It would also enable joint action with multilateral forces to secure the long, porous borders, a task that currently stretched the Government's resources. A regional framework would be valuable in that connection. In the meantime, it was vital that multilateral forces should continue to be active and that any doubts concerning them should be allayed. He therefore hoped that the mandate of the United Nations force would be extended.

49. Responding to the question asked by the representative of Egypt, he said that the 11 projects to which he had referred had been selected from over 70 proposals. The projects tackled issues involving the four priority areas that had thus far been comparatively neglected. All but one of the projects addressed security sector reform. One project, promoting the demobilization of soldiers and in particular child soldiers, had originally accounted for $6 million of the funds available; however, budgetary constraints meant that only some $2 million could be allocated to it.

50. With regard to the second priority area, namely, good governance and the rule of law, a project supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was intended to protect the rights of the child. The Department of Communications was working together with the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization to improve local community radio, which could disseminate a powerful message in favour of peace and reconciliation.

51. **Mr. Fall** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic) said that for the past few months efforts had been made together with the Government to identify immediate needs in the key sectors of security sector reform, good governance and the rule of law, and the recovery of zones affected by conflict. Additional details would be provided at a later stage in a report that would be presented to the Peacebuilding Fund and made available to the international community.

52. **The Chairperson** said he took it that there was an agreement in principle on the priorities for peacebuilding efforts in the Central African Republic, namely security sector reform, good governance and the rule of law and the establishment of development poles in a general context of progress along the lines of the inclusive political dialogue.

53. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.